4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14

753 mother—are important in ancestor worship. Any of these forebears may seize
769 a man and make him ill, require a dedicated animal or a shrine in his or her honour, and, in fact, one may find shrines in one village or kraal to kin of several different lineages. In practice the mother's mother is an ancestor who most often causes illness in her grandchildren because of her great love for them.

621 The core of a large kraal or village (20 to 80 huts) is usually the minor lineage, but there are always also affines and cognates, quite apart from the spouses of agnatic members of the lineage who themselves are usually cognates. In kraal matters it is by virtue of being not an agnate, but a member of the kindred (*mulɔ́ɔ*), that a man has a voice. The core of the district is
602 sometimes also the lineage of the district head, but the lineage is not a
634 political group and the influence and authority of its head are not a function of his relationship, agnatic or other, to the people living in the district.
643 Districts, of which there are 140—with an average area of 1 square mile and population of 250—are linked to the queen on the pattern of cattle and wife exchanges. Districts are either held by descendants of one of the original agnatic lineages of the nuclear ruling group, or they have been allocated to *vaſanoni* (wives of the queen) or to immigrant alien groups. They all send wives to the queen, who thereby becomes their son-in-law (*muḓuhulu*) and, by allocating them to other district heads and to royal relatives, she becomes parent-in-law (*vamakhulu*) to the latter. Those lineages of the royal nuclear group who send wives to the queen are both 'brothers' (agnates) and relatives-in-law (affines) to her. The use of the mechanism of the social system to align groups into reciprocal relations forges a great network of ties radiating from the queen to all strategic points in the society. It was in this way that large numbers of alien refugees were incorporated into the tribe and became related to one another. Payments of tribute and services to the queen are thus looked upon as the fulfilment of kinship obligations, in return for which the queen not only gives land and protection from enemies, but also transforms the clouds into rain and so frees men from fear and uncertainty.

602 Thus the kinship ties that bind subjects to the rain queen are interlocked with the values and institutions supporting her divinity. The homage in
641 wives that is paid to her for giving men the blessings of rain, is also the
643 means of forging the network of kinship ties. The kinship ties, again, convert political tribute and services due to the queen into morally sanctioned ceremonial exchanges between relatives-in-law; and just as there is no need for military virtues and military organization to deter enemies, since the queen, merely by withholding rain, can secure the defeat of the foe, so also there is no need to rely upon force to secure the willing allegiance of subjects who are treated to the beer that they bring, ostensibly as tribute to a sovereign but in reality as gifts from parents-in-law.

643 The queen is accordingly the pivot of the nodal institutions of the society.
772 The benevolent forces in the universe are, as the Lovedu sometimes
182

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14

say, equally divided between the ancestors and the rain queen. And it is she also who controls, in the interest of social well-being, that half of the cosmic order upon which men's life and happiness are conceived most vitally to depend. This dependence upon her and the moral imperatives of the kinship obligations between her and her subjects are the main factors conditioning the Lovedu outlook upon the world and upon society. Their ritual ideology, linking the queen's mystical powers to the welfare of society, expresses their most important conceptions of the ordering of the natural world; their kinship ideology, incorporated into the political system and converting political into moral obligations, provides the main principles governing men's relations to one another. Agreement and mutual adjustment between individuals become ultimate values which have an overriding validity in determining the rights and duties of man to man. The Lovedu political pattern follows that of the centralized states of the South Bantu; yet it is not force but reciprocity, not administrative machinery but ties of sentiment, not inflexible rules but agreement, that are the great principles of social and political obligation.

Myths and Origins

The Lovedu are not given to speculation about first beginnings or final causes. There is no world-dawn or far-off mythical event when the order of nature and of society was irrevocably instituted. There is not even a sky-god to account for lightning and thunder or to furnish men with an explanation of stellar phenomena, such as the movement of heavenly bodies. Some of the larger stars are named, for example the Pleiades which are associated with hoeing time, but the association seems to be a vestige diffused from another culture and has no real significance, whether pragmatic or mystical. A vague, hardly ever invoked myth attributes the creation of the world and man to *Khuzwane* who left his footprints on certain rocks in the north when they were still new and soft. But the act of creation, like *Khuzwane* himself, is too remote, too unrelated to present realities, to be of any concern to men; and they find no place in, nor do they in any way influence, the Lovedu philosophy of the cosmos or of society. The Lovedu apparently feel the need to posit a first or final cause, but such a cause has not continued to operate as a force. An inexplicable affliction such as sterility appears sometimes to be attributed to *Mudimo*, the creator-god of the Sotho, who, according to Lovedu thought, is identical with *Khuzwane*; but *Mudimo* in this context is to be equated with a conditional destiny, and thus does not imply belief in fatalism since the course of events can be deflected by man-made medicines. Nor is there any supplication of the creator, for the Lovedu do not conceive of any link between their ancestor spirits and the creator: *Khuzwane* cannot be approached through the ancestors.

Thus origins of the cosmic order and wonders of celestial phenomena do not exercise the Lovedu mind. When Simeon, a close relative of the queen, whom we had interested in these things, asked the old men about them,

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14

they deprecated his lack of practical sense and wondered whether he was losing his reason. What is significant to the Lovedu is not the origin but the maintenance of the order of nature. Interest in the continuity of natural forces centres, however, not on an abstract system, but on the benefit of man or rather of the Lovedu people. Among these forces the most important are those governing the auspicious movements of clouds and their transformation into rain. But they stand in no relation to the forces that brought the world into existence. Among Lovedu, in contrast for example to Oceanian peoples, there is consequently complete discontinuity between mythological origins, or the forces that operated at the dawn of the world, and present realities or the forces maintaining the existing order. Even the ancestor gods do not bridge this gap, and man's dependence upon them—and hence the force of religious sanctions—derives not from their relationship to the beginnings of things but from kinship principles.

Myths play an insignificant part in Lovedu life. Almost the only myths are legends of the institution of the present political order which give a generalized account of the migration of the royal nuclear group from Rhodesia and of the reigns of the various chiefs. There is no attempt in them to intensify the beliefs or validate the institutional arrangements underlying the sacred kingship. It is not these myths that give warranty to the queen's mystical credentials and to the complex of customs that supports them. Indeed today scant credence is accorded by the younger men to the legendary royal ancestry which traces the descent of the nuclear group to the Karanga of Monomotapa in Southern Rhodesia, for the Lovedu find it difficult to believe that they are related to a people who now appear to them to be inferior, lacking the prestige and aristocratic pretensions of their reputed ancestors. In one version of the myth the Lovedu broke away from Monomotapa under the younger 'chosen' son to whom the previous chief had given the rain-charms. He fled south as a result of his conflict with the eldest brother who had legal precedence. In another, it is a daughter who, having committed incest with her brother, escapes with the rain-charms and her infant son from her outraged father.

The legends are further concerned to explain the settlement of the Lovedu in their present environment: their choice was determined by the absence of red earth which would soil their loincloths and the abundance of *murula* trees and mounds of edible termites, both of which are valued and ritually significant items in their diet. A later dissension between two claimants to the throne is presented as a conflict between chief son and chosen son, and again the victory of the chosen son vindicates the divine right of the rain-maker against legal precedence, and in that way appears to justify the present flexible system of succession as against the challenge of the Northern Sotho emphasis on primogeniture and certainty. Just as the title to becoming ruler of a new tribe is in one version validated by the incest of brother and sister, so the later and equally momentous change from kings to queens is brought into relation with father-daughter incest.

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14

But the whole cycle of myths merely emphasizes in very general terms the importance of rain-making as a prerequisite of the claim to chieftainship and for the well-being of the tribe; it does not concern itself with justifying the validity of the various institutional arrangements that are the main support of the beliefs and values of the queen's mystical credentials.

Conception of the Natural Order

The Lovedu do not oppose man and nature. There are no explicit formulations of the nature of the universe, but a natural order inexorably going its ordained way is implicitly rejected in their conceptions. The assumption is that cosmic forces are controllable and, in fact, controlled at every turn by man for his own benefit. Since nature is of interest and importance only so far as it is or can be used by society, there is no such conception as a world order unrelated to man's activities and desires. The order of nature is a controlled one. There are various ways in which man is able to use and control powers in nature—by *vunaga* (the evil aspect of which is *vubi*), i.e. by the use of power concentrated in certain persons and objects; by appeal to the ancestor-gods upon whom are projected the powers that the child experiences in relation to its parents; through the mysteries of the *digoma* which are associated with initiation and the fertility cult; and through the divinity of the queen whose concern it is to control nature in the interests of the tribe as a whole. This idea of the control of nature by the chief on behalf of the tribe is not unique; it is common among the Bantu tribes of South Africa. But the Lovedu emphasis is on the divine origin and special affinity with nature of the queen herself, whereas in tribes such as the Zulu and Tsonga, where the mystical relation of the chief to his people and his powers over nature have to be achieved by magical strengthening on his accession and to be renewed periodically, it is largely by means of the magic of the royal regalia that the chief is able to exercise control. Among all, including Lovedu, one of the most important factors in the powers and position of the chief is the fact that he is the living representative of the long line of royal ancestors (tribal gods). There is considerable overlapping of these four categories among the Lovedu. Thus ancestors are kept satisfied and happy by a charm placed in their shrine; the queen controls rain not only through her divinity but also by means of medicines and charms and appeals to her ancestors who can prevent her from making rain. Let us consider these means for the control of nature in greater detail.

Vunaga (skilled use of power concentrated in persons and objects)

The forces of nature may be manipulated through properties intrinsic in various objects, animate and inanimate. The substances in which these attributes or powers (*maada*) reside are mainly *melimo* (medicines) or *mere* (plants). But the term medicines in this context has a wider connotation than the parallel term among us; it includes both medicine and magic, and is a medico-magical conceptual category which to the Lovedu is quite distinct

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14

was not announced for a year, while, as the body decomposed, such vital ingredients of the rain-medicine as the skin and body-dirt were carefully collected; after the announcement a period of anarchy often supervened as rival claimants marshalled their armed forces for the struggle for the throne. At the end of this year of mourning all the fires of the country were put out with purificatory rain-medicine (*mufugɔ*) from the official keeper at the capital.

This fire rite symbolizes purification of the country as well as a transition from one order to another. At any time when the country is not right (*naha a e loge*), as when there is severe drought, the fires are put out 'to usher in a new year' (i.e. a new order or period of operative forces). But the fire rite also symbolizes the means through which the allegiance of subjects and the authority of the queen are asserted. Finally, the beating out of the fires with cooling medicine is part of a complex of practices connected with heat and cold, symbolizing respectively dysphoria and euphoria. The 'earth is hot' (*mavu a fesa*) on the death of the queen and a new cosmic order has to be inaugurated by cooling it in preparation for the new rain-maker.

After the fire rite there follows the divine identification of the successor by the rite of opening the door. The rival claimants, one of whom, chosen by the inner royal council and the deceased queen, has been secretly prepared for his office, pass the hut in which the queen has died. They announce their identity to the spirit of the deceased, lightly touching the door of the hut, which yields to the chosen successor.

In and around the inner secret council where the choice is actually made centre serious tensions, not only between the present ruler and the heir-elect for whose sake and succession she must poison herself, apparently not always willingly, but also between those who depend for their position and prestige upon the patronage of one or the other. The 'chosen' heir always goes to live far away, ostensibly to conceal his or her identity but in reality also owing to a serious conflict with the reigning sovereign.[1]

For the regulation of cosmic forces the queen relies not only on her divinity but also upon the royal rain-medicines and, in the last resort, on the agreement of the royal ancestor spirits. To prevent the weakening of the rain-medicine it must be revitalized by being given the first termites and first-fruits each year, and occasionally parts of a black sheep or, in the old days, a human being.

Rain-charms are liable to weaken (*figɛhɛla*) or become defiled (*khuma*) by certain deviations from the normal course of nature unless special precautions are taken. Twins, babies cutting their upper teeth before their lower, women dying in pregnancy, abortions and miscarriages, men dying from *ɗere*, a deadly coughing disease believed to be contracted by having sex intercourse with a woman who has had a miscarriage or abortion or whose child has died before weaning—all these are deviations which contaminate the earth, causing it to be 'hot', and therefore have to be buried in wet soil or

[1] Males are not debarred from succession; indeed the early rulers were all men. But a definite preference for women rulers seems now to be firmly established.

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14

The *gɔmana* drums are no longer used by the queen to appeal to the ancestors for rain, but she permits boys from the royal village to attend *gɔmana* initiation ceremonies held occasionally, with her permission, by an outsider. The *gɔmana* concept, despite the support it gives to the mystical attributes of the queen, appears to represent a conceptual pattern that is autonomous and more fully developed in some neighbouring tribes, where the moments of the agricultural year were signalized by the sounding of the drums which were thought to bring rain and fertility, to bless the crops and cattle, and to safeguard the country from disease and enemies. In some tribes today the cult is a recent innovation in the form of initiation schools managed by outsiders who have their own drums and *zwidajani* visitors from tribes where the cult is better known.

Evil and how to avoid it

It has been shown that the Lovedu conceive the order of nature as something essentially man-controlled through the power of medicine and magic (*vuŋaga*), through the ancestors, through the divinity and powers of the queen, and through the mysterious forces associated with *digɔma*. The seasons and the rain have to be established by the queen for the crops to prosper; the baby 'grows by medicines' which guard it from harm and sickness and imbue it with health and strength; adulthood is achieved through initiations and *digɔma*; and over and above all, there is the watchful care of the gods. The natural order accordingly can and must be manipulated by utilizing benevolent and nullifying malignant forces, in order to further man's good fortune or to prevent evil from befalling him.

The Lovedu have elaborated some interesting concepts of impersonal evil powers which are concentrations of forces brought about by certain concatenations of conditions or events. These concepts are found over a much wider area, but have received special emphasis among the Lovedu. To them the ultimate good is rain. Rain is regarded as not merely the material source of life and happiness and the physical basis of man's sense of security; it is also a symbol of spiritual well-being and a manifestation that the social order is operating smoothly. Hence coolness denotes a state of euphoria: man and matter to be in order and to function properly have to be kept cool; angry ancestors must be cooled by means of medicine; even witches can be cooled and so made to forget their evil purposes. On the other hand, heat as the antithesis of the main basis of man's security, the cooling, life-giving rain, is conceived as a destructive force leading to a state of dysphoria.

'Heat' is a concept suggested by the physical properties of heat; it may sometimes be sensed, for example, as an important factor in fever, one of the most prevalent illnesses. But actually its operation is inferred from conditions of which 'heat' is clearly the cause, such as droughts and the desiccation of the crops. Here the generation of heat is ascribed to the effect upon the earth of disturbances of the regular course of nature by the burial in it

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14

of twins, abortions, miscarriages, and women dying in childbirth, or by the cosmic chaos resulting from the death of the chief. 'Hot blood' is one of the commonest causes of illness. *Leswa* (burning) is primarily a physiological condition of a woman resulting from abortion and it may be transmitted to the man who has intercourse with her, who then contracts the dreaded and fatal *dzrɛ*, a coughing disease considered to be quite different from consumption (*lefiha*). 'Heat' affects the physical potency of medicines and charms, the mental repose of the gods, the mysterious powers of *dithugula*, and the welfare of the whole country. It stirs (*dzusa*) the gods to anger and it activates the criminal propensities of witches.

'Heat' and 'cold', then, are all-important conceptual categories which are brought into relation with the functioning of the physical, mental, and emotional forces in man, in the ancestors, and in nature. Wherever 'heat' is considered to be generated, the proper antidote is the administration of 'cooling' medicines, i.e. substances which have the property of counteracting the heat or soothing the burning. The remedy is to put right what is wrong (*hu logisa*), to secure a return to normal conditions by cooling agencies. If the whole country is in an abnormal condition (*a e loge*, literally, is not right) all the fires must be sprinkled with *mufugo* medicine (*hu fuga* means to blow upon with a cool breeze). Sources of heat to the earth, e.g. twins, abortions, must be buried in wet soil; ancestor spirits aroused by 'heat' (anger) have to be calmed by squirting water (*hu phasa*) on objects once in their possession or over their graves. Cooling medicines likewise counteract that burning of the fingers which constrains witches to do evil, while charms protecting the village against witches are often called *mashɔthɔjɔ* (things causing coolness). In all these cases the active reagent in the medicines is some substance having 'cooling' properties, such as the river stones guarding the entrance to villages or built into shrines of ancestors, the succulent bulbs used in the rite for the removal of the 'dirt' (*khitshila*) of death, the great overhanging fig-trees shading shrines, the green undigested chyme from a sheep or goat's alimentary canal that figures prominently in ritual. Much medical ingenuity goes into the manufacture of powders and decoctions which, owing to their special cooling properties, will counteract heat; and it is not surprising that the Lovedu way of curing malaria is to seek drugs that will drive out the 'heat' by means of profuse perspiration. 'Heat' is most commonly caused by abnormalities associated with the procreation and the actual or threatened destruction of human life—hence the close association of 'heat' with sex, reproduction, and death.

Another malignant force, *muridi* (shadow), is conceived as evil cast by certain conditions. It infects those upon whom it falls, but if they are healthy, the effect upon them is invisible and harmless, though they become carriers who may transmit the contagion to others with whom they come into contact, especially those whose resistance is weak, such as new-born babies and sick people. 'Shadow' thus explains the spread of contagion, not by direct contact but through an intermediate unaffected carrier. *Muridi* is